

around AD 700. It is in that period that crops, indispensable for survival, were carried to and fro. Please reread the inventory of what Hotu Matu'a took with him to Rapa Nui in Thomas Barthel's *The Eighth Land* (Honolulu, 1974). Further recommended reading is J. Innes Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, Stanley M. Burstein, *Agatharchides of Cnidus on the Erythraean Sea* (The Hakluyt Society, London, 1989); and O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce, a Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca, New York, 1967).

These books clearly show that, long before Christ, there was already active maritime trade along the monsoon route from Malaya/Indonesia to China, and via India to Arabia and East Africa. Cinnamon from Ceylon was indispensable for embalming Egyptian mummies during the Han dynasty (from 206 BC); cloves from the Moluccas were consumed in China around AD 800; hundreds of bronze kettledrums from Dongson (now in Vietnam) found their way to the Indonesian island of Alor. There are many more examples. It is simply ridiculous to pretend that the Chinese in 1421 were the first navigators around the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

The final result of all this is that I cannot believe that the Chinese were the source of those pre-contact maps. So the question remains: who supplied the data? I consider this one of the most intriguing questions of history and I think that more effort should be expended to try and solve it.

Any volunteers...?

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EASTER ISLAND: SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION INTO THE WORLD'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN MICROCOSM

edited by John Loret and John T. Tanacredi
 Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2003; \$95; 240 pages
 ISBN 0-306-47494-8

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

It has always been easier to destroy than to create – and in literary terms this means it's usually easier to criticize than praise. Most decent works deserve a healthy smattering of both. The book that is the subject of this review, however, draws so much attention to its shortcomings (albeit sometimes minor ones) that praise is hard to come by.

I bought this expensive 2003 book to augment both my growing collection of Easter Island publications and my knowledge of Easter Island itself. So I began reading with enthusiasm. And when I came upon the first of a series of many typos, boo-boos, and flat-out errors, I first dismissed them as a reflection on how people rely far too heavily on spell-checkers in their word processing software. However, as the number of mistakes grew, I became distracted. That's when I started compiling a list.

Some of these will no doubt seem picayune or the product of a pedantic mind. Others may be subject to debate. But it is the sheer number of problems, the way they're addressed and, by extension, the evident lack of consistency and editing that makes me respond in two ways (well, three, if you count this review – but I was asked to write it): First, annoyance that I paid \$57 for this book, and that's with a 40% discount (the book is available from Amazon.com and Kluwer directly for a whopping \$95); second, as potentially illogical as it may be to judge a whole work on the basis of seemingly minor errors, I can't help wondering if the rest of the book – and its research – was as sloppily prepared. Below are some of the problems I encountered.

The very first line of text in the Introduction (p. 1) begins with a sentence fragment: "In the fall of 1954 as a graduate student at the University of Oslo, Norway". Not off to a good start. And, on page 13, the last name of one of the principal authors of the book – Warren Beck – is misspelled as "Back".

Numerous and distracting spelling errors include Stone Henge (p. vii); Lica (for Leica), (p. 2); Ho Tuiti for Hotu Iti (p.6); Hanga Rau for Hanga Roa (p. 15); matoas for mata'a (p. 27); Paka Vaka for Papa Vaka (p. 48 as well as Index); Mutu for Motu (p. 65 and 68); Motu Kau Kau for Motu Kao Kao (p. 78); cast for caste (p.93); cupuoles for cupules (p. 96); Hyerdahl for Heyerdahl (p. 136 and 147); Mai Kava Kava for Moai Kava Kava (p. 235); Motu Kau Lau for Motu Kao Kao, Motu Taurara for Motu Tautara; and Metaux for Métraux (p.235); Roggeveen is misspelled "Toggeveen" (p. 239); Plate 2 misspells Rano Raraku as "Rano Ravaku"; Plate 7 misspells Motu Nui as "Motu Nai".

In an effort to reinforce the theme of Easter Island as a microcosm (p. vii), it is asserted that the Rapanui had the option to migrate to other locales, in contrast to the people of the Earth generally who have no where to go – which essentially flies in the face of the closed system Easter Island is supposed

to represent in this context; ironically, later, on page 187, it is asserted that in the context of ecological and social upheaval, the Rapanui had “no other place to go”.

Two photographs (p. viii), representing a view of *moai* at Rano Raraku – taken 64 years apart – refer to “surface erosion to *Moai* figures”... yet two of the *moai* in the 1999 photo were damaged as a result of castings taken for the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt; did the authors realized this when making the observation about surface erosion?

The size of the Chilean Wine Palm is described (p. 23) as growing up to six feet in diameter, whereas all contemporary sources list its practical maximum size as 4 feet; moreover, since John Dransfield has named the extinct island palm as *Paschalococos disperta*, Loret’s insistence on describing the island palm as *Jubaea chilensis* is off the mark. (Strangely enough, later in the book – on page 143, for example – there is reference to *Paschalococos disperta* as the extinct palm.)

With no reference to the story being a legend, the authors state that the Poike peninsula was the site of fierce fighting that decided the ruling class of the island (p. 53). The legend of the Long Ears vs. Short ears is resurrected (p. 209) but, aside from a single line stating there is some *dispute* about the legend, there is no discussion about the etymology of the terms in use or the erroneous earlier interpretations of the meaning.

In a description of the Birdman competition (p. 54), the *hopu manu* is referred to as a warrior rather than a surrogate and “presumably” climbed down the cliff face at Rano Kau; why “presumably”? Has anyone suggested they dove off the cliff face?

Figure 5 (p. 161) shows a picture of the beach and *ahu* at ‘Anakena but the caption describes it as “near Tongariki”.

The authors claim that 10,000 tourists arrive annually on the island (p. 200), whereas the number is closer to 20,000.

Despite commenting about the detrimental impact of tourists touching the *moai*, there is a photo (Plate 1) showing someone actually hugging a *moai* at Rano Raraku. Is the person in the photo one of the authors? I hope not.

Varying from chapter to chapter, “El Niño” appears with and without the tilde. Accent and diacritical marks vary from chapter to chapter as well, as does appropriate usage of quotation marks and italics. Ship’s names, for example, should be italicized but they frequently appear in quotation marks. There is widespread misuse of parenthetical expressions within parenthetical expressions (i.e., where brackets would suffice, the authors frequently just double up their regular parentheses).

The size of the island in square miles or kilometers varies depending on the chapters – from as small as 46 square miles (120 square kilometers) to as large as 64 square miles (166 square kilometers). The island’s general longitude and latitude varies by author, as does the island’s distance from other landmarks.

The index is inconsistent: there are entries for “Ahu Nau Nau” and “Anu Nau Nau III” (but no “Ahu Nau Nau II”) and yet, later on, there are entries for “Nau Nau East” (?), “Nau Nau I”, “Nau Nau II”, “Nau Nau III”, and “Naunau Site”.

There are frequent references to Bahn and Flenley’s *Easter Island Earth Island* but at first glance it doesn’t appear that the principal authors of the book employed the wealth of

literature by some of the other major “players” in Easter Island studies.

As for index entries, John Randall, Patrick McCoy, Blaine Cliver, and Daniel Mann are all featured in the text but aren’t listed in the index. Even Loret, one of the two editors of the book, appears only briefly in the index despite numerous relevant occurrences of his name in various chapters. The book has an introduction but no conclusion. While a conclusion isn’t required, even in a book like this, why the editors felt it unnecessary to summarize the dozen or so chapters and the work of nearly two dozen authors and editors seems inexplicable.

The blurb on the back cover suffers from serious problems in spelling, punctuation, and grammar: “Easter Island, a World Heritage Site is still, after over 50 years since Jacques [sic] Cousteau’s work on the island, a fascinating area to explore and learn about a culture that has only remnants remaining, while documenting a marine ecology still mostly unknown”. Whew!

It is clear that the editors did little editing. Each chapter has its own voice and that’s fine – but almost every chapter starts out with the same recitation of Easter Island’s isolation, distance from mainland Chile, theories about early inhabitation, etc. This would have been better served in an introduction (especially given that many chapters differ on core facts), with the chapters themselves devoted to their own particular subjects. Being intimately familiar with this material on the one hand, and having read it repeatedly chapter after chapter on the other, it was quite tempting to gloss over each chapter’s introductory material – but that entails the risk of missing something relevant. That, in my estimation, constitutes a failure to communicate.

Not only is the writing rather clumsy and amateurish, but it seems as if the authors and editors didn’t really do their homework when it came to prior research on the island. It’s not like there’s a shortage of recent, reliable information. In the end, a good (hell, a mediocre) proofreader would have made a big difference. Not that the book itself doesn’t have anything interesting to contribute. One chapter challenges to some degree former assertions about the extent – or lack of extent – of coral growth surrounding the island.

However, I think the only way I’ll be able to find out if this book really has something of substance to offer is to re-read it again and try to overlook the errors – hoping all the while that I won’t also overlook anything useful or more serious along the way.

For those interested in obtaining this book, the list of authors includes M. A. Koenings, J. Loret, J. T. Tanacredi, K. Buckley, T. Savage, B. Cliver, D. Hubbard, M. Garcia, D. Peteet, W. Beck, J. Ortiz, S. O’Connell, D. Kurdyla, D. Mann, W. Beck and G. Burr, D. Mucciarone, R. Dunbar, C. B. Boyk, L. Magliulo-Cepriano, M. P. Schriebman, R. A. Hemm, M. Mendez, L. Kirksey, R. E. Reanier and D. P. Ryan.

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